

Submitted November 2, 2005
Approved As Amended
Date November 2, 2005

MINUTES OF THE ROCKVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING NO. 18-05
Wednesday, October 5, 2005

The City of Rockville Planning Commission convened in regular session in the Mayor and Council Chambers at 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, October 5, 2005.

PRESENT

John Britton, Chair
Frank Hilton Gerald Holtz
Sarah Medearis Kate Ostell
Robin Wiener

Absent: Steve Johnson

Present: Jim Wasilak, Chief of Planning
Sondra Block, Assistant City Attorney
Robin Ziek, HDC Planner II
Somer Cross, Planner II

RECOMMENDATION TO THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Map Amendment Application MAP2005-00094, Mayor and Council of Rockville – for the change in zoning for 315 Baltimore Road from R-60 to R-60 (Historic District).

Ms. Ziek presented the staff report. She stated that Richard and Catherine Eig recently bought the property from long time residents who lived in the house for almost 50 years. She described the house and presented a power point presentation. The property is a transitional turn of the century home at the corner of Baltimore Road and Maple Avenue. The house is a typical Victorian-style, two-story wood-frame house located on three separate lots. The house was build in the middle of Lots 25 and 26, which are the corner lots. Mr. Rabbit, who built the house, purchased the third lot in 1905 and since that time, the property is consisted of the three lots. The property has developed landscape materials with mature trees and a mid 20th century garage in the back of the property near the alley. Ms. Ziek stated that the original materials are still on the house, such as the brick for the early foundation and terra cotta tile, used on the foundation. The house has German siding, which were used on additions at the rear and west side. Ms. Ziek stated that there are some additions at the rear and west side, but the building retains a high level of integrity. The HDC has recommended this house for designation in September 2005.

In response to the Commission, Ms. Ziek stated that the applicants are not present.

Commissioner Hilton asked if the third lot is buildable. Ms. Ziek replied that it appears to be. There will be considerations of compatibility such as parking requirements, etc. The owners are aware of the requirements. Ms. Ziek stated that there will be a subdivision requirement if there are any large additions to this house because of the crossing of lot lines. She noted that any new construction would be reviewed by the HDC.

Commissioner Medearis questioned whether there are any structures on the buildable lot. Ms. Ziek replied that there are some garden walls and landscaping. If they do build on the third lot, the HDC would be involved in any proposed changes and alterations and that includes demolition. The owners have been talking with staff about potential subdivision with the idea of building another house on the property. The owners are thinking realistically and the options were considered for the potential of building a new house that would front on Maple Avenue. It makes better sense because that way their property would continue to have side yards, not being cramped makes very good sense in terms of the layout of the street, when one considers the whole street in its historic building pattern. Those homes were built with generous side yards and space.

Commissioner Medearis inquired whether there are nature trees/landscaping that are considered historic or significant on the lots. Ms. Ziek replied that there are no 200-year old trees, but there are some mature Maple trees on the front along Baltimore Road, which provide shade. It is part of the ambiance for the whole neighborhood. There is also a mature Magnolia tree that is very beautiful at the edge of the house.

Commissioner Hilton moved, seconded by Commissioner Ostell to recommend approval of Map Amendment Application MAP2005-00094, Mayor and Council of Rockville to the Mayor and Council per staff recommendations. The motion passed on a vote of 6-0.

BRIEFING

Zoning Ordinance Policy White Papers – Staff will present highlights of three white papers, including Urban Design, Optional Method of Development and Competing Values.

Mr. Wasilak introduced Somer Cross as one of the Department's newest staff members. Mr. Wasilak stated that she was hired, specifically, to help staff redraft and rewrite the Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Wasilak stated that Ms. Cross has begun the process, particularly, with the white papers, of which three of the white papers have been presented to the Mayor and Council on September 19 and 27. Mr. Wasilak informed the Commission that staff would like to give a condensed version of the presentation to bring them up to speed on what the Mayor and Council are considering at this point.

Ms. Cross presented the highlights of the major policy white papers and a series of white papers that will be presented to the Mayor and Council in the next couple of months. Ms. Cross stated that staff is currently trying to determine what policy decisions will shape the City code and also to get a general discussion going so that everybody is on the same page.

Ms. Cross briefed the Commission on the three major policy issues to be addressed in the comprehensive zoning revision process. The white papers detail the existing City policies on urban design, optional methods of development also known as special development procedures and competing values; and provide some examples of what other communities are doing to implement these policies. The presentation is an introduction to the issues and considerations to be included in the comprehensive zoning revision.

Ms. Cross concluded by stating that future discussions on these topics will discuss recommendations of staff. These particular recommendations will guide the terminology and layout of the zoning code, as staff enters into the next stage of the revision process, drafting. She also noted that staff recommends reviewing the neighborhoods.

Commissioner Hilton asked if whether the presentation this evening and what the Commissioners received a week ago was Mayor and Council driven. Mr. Wasilak replied that it is a combination of both. Commissioner Hilton noted that the timing might have to change due to the upcoming election in November and at least one of the Council members will change. He recommended that staff might want to take a look at the dates and be fair to the new council member early enough so his or her voice can be heard.

The Commission discussed concerns regarding expanding city limits, eminent domain, defining competing policy values and “Call-Up Review” and how those terms would apply, citizen outreach, how to obtain citizen input regarding the zoning process.

COMMISSION ITEMS

Chief of Planning’s Report

Mr. Wasilak reported that the Planning Commission training session coming up. It is a two-day session, which are scheduled for October 22 and 29. The location is the Chesapeake College on the eastern shore. He asked that those who are interested in attending the sessions to let him know and he would email them the information.

Mr. Wasilak stated that the City is looking at ways on how to do business and ways that the City can help the Commissioners make their recommendations. There will be a retreat for the Commissioners to discuss better ways of doing business.

Commissioner Britton commented about a procedure in handling public involvement in Commission meetings. He noted that the public has not had the opportunity to speak until late at night.

The Commission discussed having sign-up sheets for citizens planning to speak at meetings, presenting the agenda to Commissioners for the upcoming Commission meeting, and putting a cap on Commission meeting times, agenda management.

The Commission agreed to slightly change the format of public hearings to allow public comments after the applicant's presentation and before the Commission's question period.

Minutes

Commissioner Holtz moved, seconded by Commissioner Wiener to approve the minutes of Meeting No. 14-05 as written. The motion passed on a vote of 6-0-1 with Commissioner Medearis abstaining.

Commissioner Hilton moved, seconded by Commissioner Wiener to approve the minutes of Meeting No. 15-05 as amended. The motion passed on a vote of 5-0-2 with Commissioners Holtz and Medearis abstaining.

ADJOURN

After further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tyler Tansing, Commission Secretary